

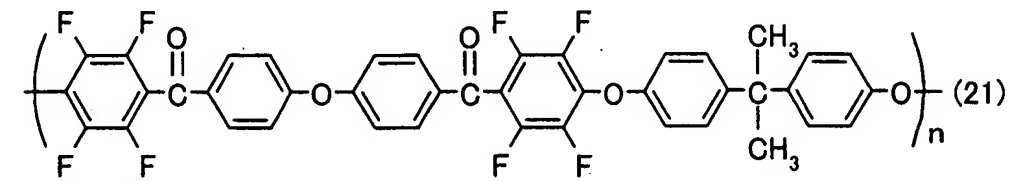
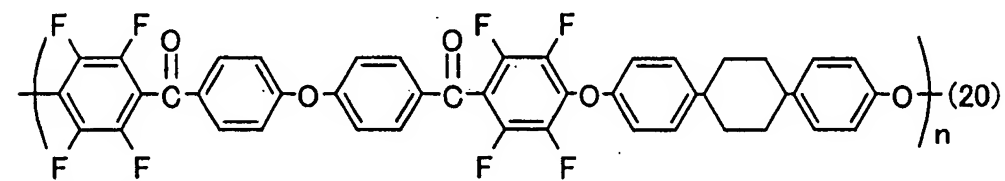
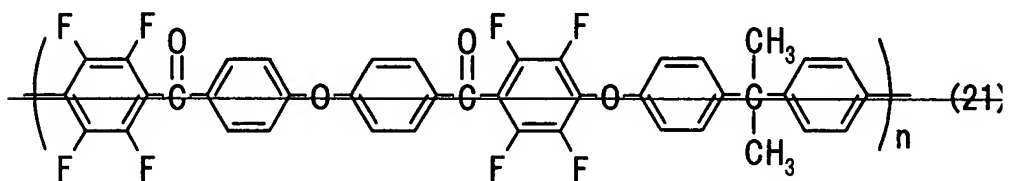
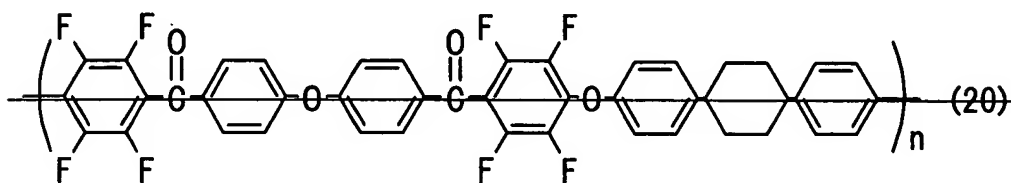
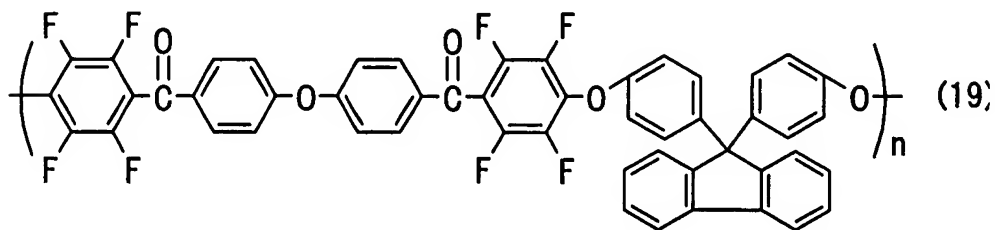
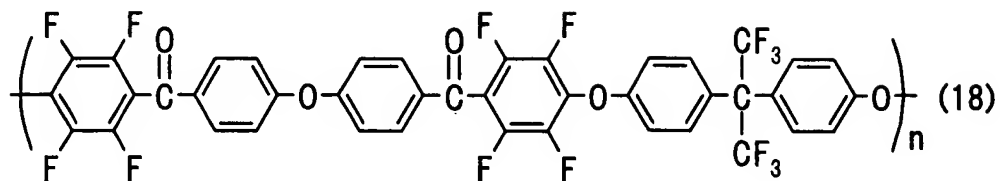
Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 4, line 15, with the following rewritten paragraph:

In the present invention, it is required that the birefringent layer (a) satisfies the formula (II). When an optical film of the present invention satisfies $1 < (n_x - n_z) / (n_x - n_y)$, a birefringent index in a thickness direction becomes larger than a birefringent index within a plane of the film, so as to improve, for example, an optical compensation of a liquid crystal cell. It is more preferable to satisfy $1 < (n_x - n_z) / (n_x - n_y) \leq 100$. If the value of $(n_x - n_z) / (n_x - n_y)$ is 100 or smaller, for example, when the optical film of the present invention is applied to a liquid crystal display, a sufficient contrast ratio can be obtained, thus an excellent viewing angle property is realized. Furthermore, in order to obtain an excellent optical compensation, the value of $(n_x - n_z) / (n_x - n_y)$ is more preferably in the range of $1 < (n_x - n_z) / (n_x - n_y) \leq 80$, and further preferably in the range of $1 \leq (n_x - n_z) / (n_x - n_y) \leq 50$. For application to a liquid crystal display of vertical aligned (VA) mode, particularly preferable range is $1 \leq (n_x - n_z) / (n_x - n_y) \leq 30$.

Please replace formulae (20) and (21) in the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 8, with the following rewritten formulae:

Specific examples of the polyaryletherketone represented by the formula (7) may include those represented by the formulae (18) to (21) below, wherein n indicates a degree of polymerization as in the formula (7).



Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 16, line 11, with the following rewritten paragraph:

On the other hand, a material of the transparent film (b) is not specifically limited as long as it satisfies the formula (I) in the present invention, but it preferably is a polymer with excellent transparency, and thermoplastic resin that is suitable for achieving the below-mentioned stretching treatment and shrinking treatment. More specifically, the material of the transparent film (b) may be for example, acetate resin such as triacetylcellulose (TAC), polyester resin, polyethersulfone resin, polysulfone resin, polycarbonate resin, polyamide resin, polyimide resin, polyolefin resin, acrylic resin, polynorbornene resin, cellulose resin, polyarylate resin, polystyrene resin, polyvinylalcohol resin, polyvinylchloride resin, polyvinylidene chloride resin, polyacrylic resin, and a mixture thereof. A liquid crystal polymer is exemplified as well. Moreover, for example, a mixture of a thermoplastic resin whose side chain has a substituted or unsubstituted imide group and a thermoplastic resin whose side chain has a substituted or unsubstituted phenyl group and a nitrile group, which is described in JP 2001-343529 A (WO01/37007), can be used. A specific example of the mixed thermoplastic resin is a resin composition containing alternating copolymer containing isobutene and ~~N-methylene maleimide~~ N-methylmaleimide and a copolymer of acrylonitrile/styrene. Among these materials exemplified above, for example, a material which can provide relatively lower birefringent index when used to form a transparent film is preferred, more specifically, the above-described mixture of a thermoplastic resin whose side chain has a substituted or unsubstituted imide group and a thermoplastic resin whose side chain has a substituted or unsubstituted phenyl group and a nitrile group is preferable.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 24, line 21, for the following rewritten paragraph:

Another example of the polymer film is described in JP 2001-343529 A (WO 01/37007).
The polymer material used can be a resin composition containing a thermoplastic resin whose side chain has a substituted or unsubstituted imido group and a thermoplastic resin whose side chain has a substituted or unsubstituted phenyl group and nitrile group, for example, a resin composition containing an alternating copolymer of isobutene and ~~N-methylene maleimide~~ N-methylmaleimide and an acrylonitrile-styrene copolymer. Alternatively, the polymer film may be formed by extruding the resin composition.